Action plan children's rights Saba

Introduction

In May 2013, UNICEF presented six reports by the title "Children of the Kingdom: rights of the child in the Kingdom of the Netherlands". Per country of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the reports discussed the children's rights and compared the situation with the International Convention on the Rights of the Child. One point that clearly came forward is that it is important to cooperate better, and that is why Aruba, St. Maarten, Curaçao, and the Netherlands: Bonaire, St Eustatius and Saba, decided during the Kingdom Conference in 2014 to work together. The 'inter-country taskforce' was established for this purpose.
The inter-country task force drew up an action plan of which a first draft was presented to the governments of the countries. The Public Entity of Saba provides input for the action plan of the Netherlands via this Action Plan that's focused on the Saban situation. This Action Plan contains proposed actions that have to be taken to improve the children's rights situation on Saba. The actions are focused on the 5 key points of attention that were defined by the inter-country taskforce:

1. Focus on the family by working in an integrated way;
2. Violence against children;
3. Safety net;
4. Role of the parents in raising their children;
5. Conditions and infrastructure.

Per key point an explanation is given; the current situation on Saba, where the bottlenecks are, what the points for improvement are and what Saba wants to develop and achieve.

Current situation

On Saba a first draft for youth policy has been written. In addition, in January 2015 round-table talks were conducted with the theme "How can we contribute to a Saba that's safer for children?". The stakeholders involved were local government, Center for Youth and Family, different NGO's dealing with youth, spiritual leaders, the schools, social workers, Guardianship Council, SVPCN, police and media. This meeting made problems in the community concerning youth transparent, considered from the perspective of different parties, companies and organizations in the community. During this meeting, it was decided to establish a steering group; the Saba Child's Rights Committee. The Saba Child's Rights Committee's mission is to stimulate greater cooperation between organizations involved in youth care on Saba and to nurture a better environment for youth and families.

The main conclusion of the stakeholders on the island is that a lot has already been achieved in the past years. The organizations are cooperating on a more permanent basis; they have developed a more intense understanding between them and know how to find each other easier and faster. This still needs attention and improvement, through manpower, capacity building and finance. One of the main focus points underlying this plan is to get more involvement of the parents, and of the community at large in protecting children's rights.

1. Focus on the family by working in an integrated way

The "1 family, 1 plan, 1 coordinator" approach is pursued. The chain cooperation has started off in a stronger and broader way since the beginning of the school year 2014 – 2015. All stakeholders work together as a chain with individual cases and individual families.
The CART team works as an overarching body within the educational setting. In the CART the following organizations work together: representatives of the primary school and secondary school, second chance education (SKJ), day care, school medical officer, SVPCN, EC2 and Center for Youth and Family.
The JCO team works as an overarching body within the judicial setting. In the JCO team the following organizations work together: Guardianship Council, the public prosecutor, police, the truancy officer, the secondary school and Center for Youth and Family.
If necessary, little groups out of both teams decide to work together concerning specific cases. All stakeholders involve parents, care takers, family and child first to set out the framework.
However, it is still complicated to involve exactly those families that need assistance the most. Ways to reach particularly these families are still being sought. Training is needed to supply the stakeholders with the means to act appropriately and effectively, and there is still room for improvement in the cooperation within the chain.

What is needed concretely?

- Strengthen the professionals dealing with families and children at risk.
  - Strengthen and expand the capacity of the professionals through continuous training;
  - Investigate which skills to protect children's rights are needed on the island, and invest in training of those skills;
- A clearer protocol concerning privacy and information sharing is needed, so that care providers feel more certain deciding what can and cannot be shared in consultations. For this purpose, it would be good to engage a legal consultant on a project basis. Not only a protocol has to be written, it also has to be enforced and communicated, so that all relevant parties are getting used to working with it;
- Training care providers in policy/legislation. After 10-10-10 what is permitted exactly has been unclear to many;
- Investigate improvements in the meeting structure: are all cases covered? Are the right people at the table for the right meetings?
- Investigate the need to expand the capacity of youth workers on Saba;
- A youth director or coordinator is needed to implement these activities and plans, and to secure and enhance cooperation between the different stakeholders working with youth.

2. Violence against children

As UNICEF outlines in its report, some children grow up in a violent environment. Taking into account the diverse compositions of families and child raising skills it is imperative that parents are provided with alternative tools for effective parenting. More emphasis has to be given on ways of communicating, effective discipline practice and uniting the family structure without the use of physical discipline.

In recent years community members have been transitioning towards acceptance of assistance. Some of the challenges families face when experiencing problems are fear of exposure and shame. Parents and families inability to effectively parent and an understanding of abuse on a child remains a major dilemma, however to a trained professional it is an alert for specialized care. For the care providers it is often obvious and they have suspicions. In case of a suspicion, a care provider still has too little to offer because of the lack of specialists and professional care. There is no safe house and there is no clear protocol as yet that prescribes what to do in case of domestic violence or abuse. Once a case is dealt with, there are not enough professionals available to guide the individual case, so the family and the child can fall back unnoticed.
It is very important that change arises from the community itself, supported by the professionals. Communication campaigns can contribute to make people more aware of the consequences of violence and abuse and at the same time we have to pay attention to alternative methods.

What is needed concretely?

- A public awareness campaign focusing on (positive) parenting skills and children's rights;
- Domestic violence and abuse need to get out of the taboo zone;
- Investigate to what extent it is possible to create a safe house on Saba;
- The youth coordinator that's mentioned above is needed to initiate and coordinate these improvements.

3. Safety net

The school has to be a central institution in the creation of a safety net. Plans are in place to expand the functions of the school. The daycare will be located next to the two schools and there will be more space in school for out-of-school activities, such as homework assistance. Besides, there is great demand for more out-of-school activities for the youth from 12-19 years old. The organizations that offer specific out-of-school activities, such as Child Focus, will be involved, as well as the afterschool care program of Elka Charles. If extra space is available at the school for activities, and more can be organized here, children can participate in an activity straight out of school at the same premises. The focus then would be for all children; from 0 till 18, and even beyond that age. It is our vision to work with the children and let them be the co-designers of activities, idea's and possibilities: let them participate in the organization. Children on the island like to have responsibility and like to take care of the younger ones. This can be of great value once the professionals can make positive use of it.

What is needed concretely?

- The idea of out-of-school activities needs to be initiated more broadly towards "child stimulation programs". The purpose is not only to keep the children busy but to inspire them, stimulate them, assist and support them in their growth and development into adults. Not only expanding the package of activities is important, but also supplementing it with more educational activities, such as learning to speak in public, debating and having a say in, and joining in thinking about important subjects in society;
- The afterschool care has to be expended and improved as a safety net for children with parents who do not have the time to take care of their children after school;

- ❖ Strengthening and expansion of pedagogical care and supervision for children (0-19) outside of their home:
    - o Strengthen the supervisors of current organizations, schools and afterschool care through continuous training;
    - o Expand and diversify capacity to organize and supervise activities;
- ❖ The youth coordinator that's mentioned above is needed to initiate and coordinate these improvements.

4. Role of the parents in raising their children

The parents have the most important role in raising their children. Together with the professionals in the field they need to be trained to learn about their responsibility and how important their role is. Cooperation with the parents is important to help and support their child. Saba has many different family compositions and especially the absence of one of the parents in a family is a point of attention.

There is no pedagogic vision at the moment. That makes it difficult for the parents to perform their job in raising their child. Learning starts by imitating and copying the example. A positive parenting program & method adjusted to the culture in the Caribbean and in Saba can be very useful.

What is needed concretely?

- ❖ Parenting programs that are applicable for Saba have to be searched for; methods that fit into the Caribbean culture and teach parents more about educational and pedagogic techniques;
- ❖ Invest in activities and workshops that focus on family values and parenting skills;
- ❖ Create a mechanism to involve parents and other community members in these activities and workshops;
- ❖ The youth coordinator that's mentioned above is needed to initiate and coordinate these improvements.

5. Conditions and infrastructure

In general, very few quantitative and qualitative figures are available on youth, which makes it more difficult to apply policy in the right way. Talks are conducted with CBS on introducing a Youth Monitor. The Public Entity has no budget available for it and Saba depends on the CBS lobby to let the Youth Monitor BES connect to the Youth Monitor in the Netherlands.

What is needed concretely?

- ❖ More figures and statistics, something we hope will become possible when Saba can be integrated in the Youth Monitor of the CBS;
- ❖ Implement a qualitative instrument to triangulate statistical data;
- ❖ The youth coordinator that's mentioned above is needed to initiate and coordinate improvements.

Where do we want to go?

This action plan recommends a wide variety of actions that need to be taken to improve the lives of children on Saba. At this moment we don’t have the personnel capacity to implement all these recommendations. Therefore, a youth coordinator/director needs to be hired to implement this action plan. The coordinator will work in close collaboration with the Saba Child Rights Committee, and with counterparts on Statia and Bonaire. The coordinator should be hired for a period of at least two years and should ideally be positioned between Center for Youth and Family and the Local Government.
The coordinator needs to focus on lasting solutions for Saba. Therefore, the coordinator has to work closely with the professionals in the field, and the community at large, so the work he or she does will have a lasting effect on securing the rights of the child on Saba.